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**Medicine and Culture Abroad: Lago de Atitlan, Guatemala**

Micah Helton

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Medicine and Culture Abroad: Lago de Atitlán, Guatemala

Children’s Mercy Kansas City, Kansas City, Mo.

Micah Helton, MD July 2019

Background
- I chose a Global Health month in Guatemala with the goal of seeing medicine in a developing country, participating in a culture different than my own, and furthering my Spanish for future medical practice.

Objective
- Learn from local nurses, doctors, and traditional healers
- Improve communication in Spanish
- Experience local customs and culture
- Connect with patients of all ages in a novel setting

Preparation
- Engaged in Global Health lectures and simulations in preparation for culture shock and cultural humility.
- Reviewed resources from host physician about common ailments and the health care system in Guatemala
- Researched the history of devastating civil war and current political climate in view of an imminent election

Experience
- Worked alongside a Guatemalan General Practice physician to treat indigenous Mayan patients of all ages.
- Treated patients from birth to end-of-life with a broad range of conditions.
- Met with a local midwife, teachers, doctors, and nurses to learn about traditional and locally-practiced modern medicine.
- Attended Spanish class and lived with host family.

Reflection
- Understanding the political, cultural, and ideological background of patients is key in successfully treating medical problems.
- Mosquito borne illness and childhood malnutrition are common. Mortality rate before age 5 is high: 28 in 1,000 births.

Future Directions
- Acknowledging different cultural and personal backgrounds for effective communication in my own practice moving forward
- Continue to learn and practice Spanish